

**Synopsis of the Japanese Films
for the “Karachi International Film Festival”
December 8-10, 2013
Organized by the DAWN Media Group**

Note: All the films will be screened in the original Language, Japanese, with English subtitles.

1. Sumo Do, Sumo Don't (Released in 1992) 16mm film, Genre: Comedy

☆105 Minutes

In order to graduate from college in a timely manner, and to gain the job waiting for him due to his family connections, Shuhei must join the school's *sumo** team to please his professor. Shuhei and the other reluctant *sumo* wrestlers on the team are inspired by the professor's determination into doing their best for the school. This Japanese comedy film is directed by Masayuki Suo, and was chosen as Best Film at the 16th Japan Academy Prize Ceremony (1993).

**Sumo*...Sumo is a Japanese style of wrestling and it is Japan's national sport.

2. Grave of the Fireflies (Released in 1988) 16mm film, Genre: Animation, World War II, Semi-Autobiographical

☆90 Minutes

In June 1945 during the air raid in Kobe, western Japan, teen age boy Seita and his four years old sister Setsuko lose their sick mother. As their father has been out of contact since he had gone off to war, the brother and sister are taken in by a distant relative. Unable to stand the ill-treatment by their aunt, Seita and Setsuko move into a bomb shelter to live alone together. As the war worsens, Setsuko gradually wastes away. Seita cheers Setsuko and tries his best to survive while reminding himself of their kind mother, strict father, and the peaceful days only a few months back. Finally, the day of Japan's defeat arrives.

The story is all the more powerful because we see the devastating effects of war from the perspective of the vulnerable, and the elegance of the animation - so full of precious little details - makes it a truly special and unique film.

3. Swing Girls (Released in 2004) 16mm film, Genre: Drama, Comedy

☆105 Minutes

At a rural girl's high school in northern Japan, remedial math classes are being held during the summer holiday. Looking for a way out, Tomoko and two of her classmates volunteer to deliver lunches left behind by the school's brass band on the way to support the baseball team at a crucial game. However, when the band subsequently suffers a bout of food poisoning, Tomoko and her friends seize the chance to ditch summer school as replacement musicians. Despite a severe lack of talent, they gradually succumb to the infectious rhythms of big band jazz and start to take the music seriously. Just as they are about to perform in public for the first time, the band members they replaced return and the ring-ins are shunted to the sidelines. However, this fails to dampen the girls' newfound spirit, and they take up part-time jobs and practice in the streets to achieve their dream of playing at the school's music festival.

A feel-good youth comedy from director Shinobu Yaguchi.

4. **The Place Promised in Our Early Days (Released in 2004): DVD,**

Genre: Animation, Drama, Romance, Science Fiction

☆90 Minutes

It is a Japanese anime (animation) film created and directed by a talented young director Makoto Shinkai. The film opens with an alternate ending to World War II, when the islands of Japan are divided into northern and southern territories, and the island of Hokkaido, Japan's second largest prefecture, separated from mainland Japan and formed an independent nation called "The Union". Middle school friends Hiroki and Takuya share two common interests: a girl named Sayuri and a plan to build a plane to fly to the mysterious tower they can see across the straits in Enzo (Hokkaido). Both pledge to fly there with Sayuri one day, but time and circumstances separate the trio before the plane can be finished. Years later, with war looming on the horizon, their paths cross again as the two boys learn that Sayuri has been asleep for years and cannot wake. Somehow her condition is connected to the mysterious tower and interaction with parallel universes, but in her dreams Sayuri awaits for an old promise to be fulfilled, and holds the key to the world's salvation.

The film's original title in Japanese literally means "Beyond the Clouds, the Promised Place".

5. **Water Boys (Released in 2001) 16mm film, Genre: Drama, Comedy, Sports**

☆90 Minutes

Japanese comedy film written and directed by Shinobu Yaguchi, about five boys who start the synchronized swimming (which is generally women's sport) team at their high school.

Suzuki is a high-school student who aspires to become a great swimmer; however, he is the only person in the school's swimming team. Soon, a beautiful new swimming teacher starts working at the high school. Dozens of boys decide to join the swimming team, but when they realize that she teaches synchronized swimming, all but Suzuki and four other boys drop out. The teacher soon takes maternity leave, and for some time the team is on hiatus. However, when Suzuki watches a dolphin show he decides to ask the dolphin trainer to be their coach. The dolphin trainer exploits them as free labour and has no intention of training them, and in an attempt to ditch them, leaves them to practice on their own. When he returns after sometime, to his surprise, he discovers that they are totally synchronized now and doing well. He takes them back and the boys continue to practice. Meanwhile, while training in the sea, a tourist with a video camera films the boys, thinking that they are drowning, and the boys appear on TV. Seeing this, the boys who had earlier left the swimming team rejoin, and are taught synchronized swimming by the five boys.

The film climaxes when the boys' team get to perform their synchronizing swimming at their annual school festival.

The film was a popular success in Japan, and was nominated for eight prizes at the 25th Japan Academy Prize Ceremony (2002), winning awards for "Best Newcomer" and "Best Music Score".

6. **Hana no Ato (Released in 2009): DVD, Genre: Drama, Romance, Historical**

☆110 Minutes

The film is based on a short story by a noted historical novelist, Shuhei Fujisawa. The story is set at the Edo period, Japan, in Unasaka domain, Northeastern Japan. Crossing practice swords with Magoshiro, the domain's best sword-fighter, Ito, the only daughter of an Unasaka official and a talented fencer, falls in love for the very first time. Several months later, however, Magoshiro is ensnared in the insidious plot of a high clan official, not knowing what to do, Magoshiro takes his own life. Upon hearing the devastating news, Ito vows to take revenge.

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